

Upcoming Events

*Voca Program Evaluation Trainings
July 18, 2000 - East Lansing, MI
July 28, 2000 - Sault Ste. Marie, MI
Information: David Bercham at (517) 324-8388

*The 26th Annual NOVA Victim Assistance Conference
July 30 - August 4, 2000
Miami Beach, FL
Information: (202) 232-6682; fern@try-nova.org; www.try-nova.org/conference/conf.html

*The Great Lakes Native American Conference
August 1 - 3, 2000
Ann Arbor, MI
Information: Sandy Palazzolo at (313) 226-9510

The 10th International Symposium on Victimology
August 6 - 11, 2000
Montreal, Quebec, Canada
Information: (514) 287-1248;
info@victimology-2000.com; www.victimology-2000.com

*MJJ Juvenile Law II Seminar
Victim Rights Presentation
August 8, 2000; 1:00 p.m. - 5:00 p.m.
East Lansing, MI
Information: Peter Stathakis at (517) 334-8606

The Great Plains Regional Conference
August 22 - 24, 2000
Rapid City, SD
Information: Nancy Stoner Lampy at (605) 224-1256 ext. 30

The 5th International Conference on Family Violence
September 23 - 27, 2000
San Diego, California
Information: (619) 623-2777 ext. 406;
jmarciano@mail.cspp.edu; www.fvsai.org

* VOCA Travel Funds Approved



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James K. Haveman, Jr., Director

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The **Michigan** Advocate

A publication of the Michigan Crime Victim Services Commission

Summer 2000

Welcome to the Michigan Advocate!

■ By Michael J. Fullwood, Director, Crime Victim Services Commission

Greetings! Welcome to the first issue of *The Michigan Advocate*. You will find us in your mailbox twice a year and we hope to become an informative and interesting addition to your reading. Simply stated, *The Michigan Advocate* is intended as an instrument for enhanced communication between the Crime Victim Services Commission (CVSC) and its many partners and colleagues. We are actively soliciting articles and comments from you for inclusion in future issues. If you have something to say that would be of interest to the victim service community, let us know by contacting Beth O'Leary at the Michigan Public Health Institute (MPHI) at (517) 324-8387.

In late 1997 the CVSC began discussions with MPHI to develop a project to improve our ability to monitor the accomplishments and needs of federal VOCA grant recipients. The grant compliance and needs assessment effort is now well into its second year and we are very grateful for the outstanding effort and dedication that VOCA funded agencies have supplied in making this project a success.

In addition to site visits, this project includes several components designed to complement other CVSC activities. First, we are convening an annual Council of

Advocates meeting. These local leaders, administrators and advocates provide us with invaluable and representative feedback on major goals and direction. Second, evaluation training specifically geared to VOCA projects will begin this summer. Dr. Cris Sullivan of the Michigan State University Department of Community Psychology is guiding this effort. Third, the production and distribution of this newsletter for a broad-based victim services audience is hereby underway.

Simply stated, The Michigan Advocate is intended as an instrument for enhanced communication between the Crime Victim Services Commission and its many partners and colleagues.

I want to thank our excellent contributors for assisting us with this first issue. Gretchen Nielsen, Civil Legal Assistance Attorney for the Underground Railroad Inc. in Saginaw, and Tom Nelson of MPHI contemplate the role of civil recourse for domestic violence victims. Mary Lovik, an outstanding training attorney with the Michigan Judicial Institute, outlines MJJ's upcoming victims' rights training project for court personnel. David Bercham of MPHI

announces upcoming evaluation workshops for VOCA grantees. Tom Nelson of MPHI outlines the Council of Advocates Meeting that was held in March. Terri Young, Victims' Rights Coordinator for the Prosecuting Attorneys Association of Michigan (PAAM), explains the very significant work of the PAAM Victims' Rights Forum, a testament to the victims' rights commitment of Michigan's prosecutors. Terry Jungel, Executive Director of the

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Legal Recourse for Domestic Violence Survivors

■ *By Gretchen Nielsen, J.D. and D. Thomas Nelson, J.D.*

Over the last 15 years, the growing victims rights movement has seeped into the consciousness of the nation and into many different areas of human services and law. One area that has seen burgeoning growth for survivors of crime is civil litigation. Traditionally, civil litigation has been an alternate or additional path for survivors and their families. The most notable example is the civil action against O.J. Simpson for the wrongful deaths of Nicole Brown Simpson and Ronald Goldman. More victim service professionals and lawyers are recognizing that perpetrators do often, though not always, have the financial resources that can be tapped to help survivors put their lives back together. Even more so, perpetrators have a moral and financial obligation to do so. In some cases, other parties who

may have had a legal obligation to protect survivors from being victimized may also have some financial liability. It is crucial that great care be taken when a victim and her or his attorney contemplates a civil action. How will the survivor and her or his family be served in pursuing a lawsuit? What negative effects, if any, will such a case have on a criminal prosecution? What are the odds that justice will be served and the survivor will recover both the financial loss from the victimization and the loss of feelings of dignity and control in the aftermath of the crime? Will a lawsuit be more traumatic than it is worth? These are hard questions that must be asked. In addition to the more traditional types of civil actions now increasingly utilized by and for survivors of crime, the victims movement is now seeing more growth and avenues of legal recourse that serve the sometimes more immediate needs of survivors of family and sexual violence. Recently, the U.S. Department of

Justice’s Violence Against Women Office began to disburse grants to community agencies serving survivors of domestic and sexual violence for the purpose of providing legal assistance to those who cannot afford to hire a lawyer. At least one Michigan VOCA grantee, the Underground Railroad in Saginaw, has received such a grant. The Underground Railroad is a domestic violence shelter that has been operating for over 20 years. During this time, the shelter has expanded its services to offer counseling, group sessions, day care for children, a tutor, a medical clinic, and now a legal department. In 1998, the Underground Railroad applied for a Civil Legal Assistance Violence Against Women Act grant. The Civil Legal Assistance Project began in December of 1999. The staff consists of one attorney and two paralegals. The Civil Legal Assistance Project is designed to help clients of the Underground Railroad with civil legal advice and representation. The Civil Legal Assistance Project addresses many legal issues

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Welcome...
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Michigan Sheriff’s Association (MSA), gives us an informative overview of MSA’s dedication and work in support of victim assistance efforts. And Bernadine Lasher, Executive Director of the Council on Domestic Violence and Sexual Assault in Midland, serves up some good common sense about building collaborative community systems.

We hope you enjoy this first effort. We welcome comments and suggestions to make this newsletter more useful to the reader. See you in the fall issue. ■

Questions regarding CVSC Programs may be directed to the Program Specialist:

- Crime Victims Assistance/VOCA Grants:
Leslie O’Reilly (517) 373-1826
- Crime Victims Compensation Claims/Restitution Coordination:
Marian Smith (517) 373-0594 or Janine Washburn (517) 373-3640
- Crime Victims Rights/Victim Notification:
Beth Adcock (517) 373-1902

The Crime Victim Services Evaluation Project is supported by Award No. 2000-VA-GX-0026 awarded to the Michigan Public Health Institute by the Michigan Department of Community Health, Crime Victim Services Commission. The grant award comes from the Federal Crime Victims Funds, established by the Victims of Crime Act of 1984.

Production & Distribution of *The Michigan Advocate* is provided by the Michigan Public Health Institute. Suggestions, comments, and articles may be directed to:

Beth O’Leary, Michigan Public Health Institute (517) 324-8387 or boleary@mphi.org

MPHI Staff relevant to this publication:

- D. Thomas Nelson, *Editor-in-Chief*
- Beth O’Leary, *Managing Editor*
- David Bercham, *Contributing Editor*
- Kimberley Lamphere, *Design & Layout*



Community Collaboration is Key

■ *By Bernadine Lasher*

When I was asked to submit an article for this publication, my first reaction, though flattered, was to wonder what I would write. My subject matter was to explain, briefly, how my agency, the Council on Domestic Violence & Sexual Assault (Shelterhouse) has built collaborative efforts with other systems in our community.

Our program, which serves Midland and Gladwin counties, now enjoys mutually respectful, workable relationships with most agencies that we interact with for our clients. That has not always been the case. As a newly hired executive director in 1992, it was quickly apparent that one of my immediate goals was to repair relationships that, for whatever reasons in the past, had become adversarial. My question was how to do it and where to start. I tried looking for models on collaboration and I tried listening to all the good advice people wanted to give me. In the end, I decided on what works best for me – common sense, listening skills and understanding the other person’s or agency’s positions. (Now you can see my dilemma in writing this article – does anyone want to read about common sense and listening skills?) When I questioned this, I was told that the simplest things are the most easily

overlooked. With that in mind, I offer you what has worked well for me. I refer to that time in my career as the “carry a dove but have broad shoulders” period. First, I prioritized those agencies that needed the most attention. Then I did some homework with each one. What problems did the staff (mine) have with our interactions? What did they feel the other agency should be doing? I got a brief history of the way the agencies had worked together in the past – negative and positive – and decided on what a good collaboration would look like to us. The next step was to arrange a meeting with my counterpart at the agency. I introduced myself, expressed my desire to work more closely with their agency and hear their concerns, complaints or compliments about us. This is the part where the broad shoulders and the dove came in. In each case, I listened to old gripes, complaints that sometimes reached mythological proportions, and a few compliments. More importantly, I heard what each of these agencies could and could not do because of their policies, the law, and the limits of their power. In each case, at the end of my meetings, I repeated what was becoming my mantra: “Neither of us can change what happened before, but we can begin fresh from this day forward, to work collaboratively and better serve our mutual clients.”

Following logically in the process was to have the staffs meet jointly, if possible. This was usually done at the staff meeting of one or the other of the agencies. If that was impossible, key staff members who work together met. In these meetings no old gripes, accusations or finger pointing was allowed. The focus was on the here and now, how to better understand each other and work together to give our clients the best from both groups. (Food was always served at these meetings. It works wonders!) If training was needed, it was quickly arranged and completed. Lines of communication and dialogue were established and adhered to. When problems have arisen (usually because a client has heard something incorrectly) it has been handled immediately, staff to staff, for clarification. This process may appear simple and in many ways it is. However, it does depend on the sincerity of those involved, it requires building trust, being open to others’ points of view, not personalizing the complaints and above all looking at what is best for those individuals we serve. Our collaborative efforts with agencies in our community have done just that – better served our clients and that is what we are here for. ■

Bernadine Lasher is the Executive Director of the Council on Domestic Violence & Sexual Assault in Midland, MI.

Web Resources

Michigan Judicial Institute
www.supremecourt.state.mi.us/mji.htm

This site offers a calendar of conferences and seminars, a list of publications, legislative news, information on public programs, court publications and links to other relevant sites.

Michigan Crime Victims
www.mivictims.org/services/

Produced by the Michigan Victim Alliance, this site offers access to national and state victim organizations as well as information about the Michigan Crime Victim Services Commission, various branches of the criminal justice system, and sex offender databases.

National Organization for Victim Assistance (NOVA)
www.try-nova.org/index.html

This site provides links to crisis resources and additional related web sites, NOVA publications, articles regarding crisis issues, telephone numbers for crisis resources, and information on upcoming events and trainings.

National Center for Victims of Crime
www.ncvc.org/main/main.htm

This web site offers links to the organization’s five program areas: victim services, public education, public policy, civil justice, and training and technical assistance. It includes a virtual library, a toll free help line and a calendar of events.

Michigan Community Health Electronic Library
www.mchel.org/grants/index.html

For grants resources, this site is a clearinghouse of information related to funding of non-profit organizations.

Michigan Coalition Against Domestic and Sexual Violence (MCADSV)
www.mcadsv.org

This site provides information about domestic and sexual violence, resource guides for service providers, on-line resources, homicides in Michigan, Michigan sexual assault and domestic violence programs, on-line newsletters, internet resources and the MCADSV.

Second Annual Council of Advocates Meeting Held

■ *By D. Thomas Nelson, J.D.*

The Crime Victim Services Commission (CVSC) and the Michigan Public Health Institute (MPHI) are dedicated to ongoing efforts to share information. In developing improved methods, services and responses to the needs of VOCA grantees and the crime victims they serve, the CVSC and MPHI are continually working to access the considerable expertise of the many VOCA grantees providing vital services to crime victims in Michigan. In short, what better way is there to discover what is needed than to simply ask?

As part of this effort, the second annual gathering of representatives from a cross-section of victim advocates and members of the staffs of the CVSC and MPHI occurred on

March 6. Appropriately deemed the Council of Advocates Meeting, participants from VOCA-supported agencies from communities and Native American Tribes throughout Michigan convened in East Lansing. These included advocates from Grand Rapids, Saginaw, Sault Ste. Marie, Midland, Kalamazoo, Hannahville, Mt. Clemens and Detroit.

During the day-long meeting, participants discussed a host of topics, including news from the CVSC, an update on grant compliance review and needs assessment site visits, content for this Michigan Advocate newsletter, program evaluation matters, this summer's program evaluation workshop curriculum, and an update on the development of an online grant application process. If you would like a full Council of Advocates Meeting summary, please contact MPHI's Kim Lamphere at (517) 324-8358 or klampher@mphi.org.

PAAM Forum Bolsters Victims' Rights

■ *By Terri Young*

The mission of the Victim Rights Forum is fourfold: to foster the education of its members (membership is open to members of the Prosecuting Attorneys Association of Michigan and their employees); to disseminate and share information pertaining to the delivery of services to the victims and witnesses of crime; to study legislative proposals affecting victims and witnesses of crimes in order to make recommendations to the Prosecuting Attorneys Association of Michigan (PAAM); to promote the interests of the public and prosecutors in assuring that victims and witnesses of crime are accorded proper respect for their important role in the criminal justice process.

The Victim Rights Forum, originally named the Victim/Witness Forum, was created in April of 1985 at a conference sponsored by the prosecutor's office in Kalamazoo. Through the efforts of Prosecutor James J. Gregart and Karen Hayter, then Director of Victim/Witness Services, by-laws were written, officers were elected and subsequent meetings were scheduled. Mark Gleason, former Director of Victim Services in Kent County, was the first elected chairperson, in 1986. Mark chaired the

forum for two years and was assisted in administrative duties by Kathleen Quigley, former Director of Victim Services and Chair-elect in Wayne County, and by Karen Hayter, Secretary for Kalamazoo County. Officers for the 1999-2000 term are: President, Anita Droog, Victim Witness Unit Administrative Supervisor for Kent County; Vice President, Anita Rositas, Victim Rights Coordinator for Gratiot County; Secretary, Jan Fortier, Victim Rights Advocate/Case Manager for Kent County.

In 1998, PAAM created the position of Victim Rights Program Coordinator. This position has many responsibilities. It serves as a liaison between the forum and PAAM, and is responsible for the development and implementation of the forum's annual conference, for writing and administering grants to aid the forum in its quest to foster the education of its members, and for assisting forum leadership in meeting its goals and objectives.

In 1999, forum members updated the by-laws and the PAAM board approved the updated by-laws in January. One significant change was the name of the forum. It now became the Victim Rights Forum. Officers for the Victim Rights Forum were changed to

president, vice president and secretary. All officer positions are elected annually by the membership of the Victim Rights Forum at each annual Victim Rights Conference.

The forum is subject to the control of PAAM, which must approve its existence. Meetings are held at various locations around the state every six weeks. In addition to regular business, the meetings provide crime victim advocates with the opportunity to share ideas and processes that are working in their various counties. In-service trainings are offered from time to time as part of these meetings. Guest speakers are invited to the meetings to provide information and discuss topics of concern regarding crime victims, and to update members on community resources available to assist victims.

At least once a year, the forum sponsors a seminar to explore in depth a wide variety of topics pertinent to the roles of advocates within the criminal justice system. A few examples of the training topics offered include crime victim compensation, restitution enforcement, crisis intervention, victim-witness management and support staff training, use of volunteers, domestic violence, sexual assault, homicide co-victims, and empathy training.

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The forum publishes two newsletters, the *Victim Rights Forum Newsletter* and the *Victim Rights Legislative Newsletter*. Both newsletters are published in January, March, May, July, September, and November of each year.

The forum has a number of committees active in addressing specific concerns. These generally meet at least once every other month and sometimes more often as needed. Forum members sign up for committees they are interested in and the president appoints a chair for each committee. The president and the PAAM coordinator serve as ex-officio members of each committee. Currently, there are five standing committees.

The Victim Rights Forum Committees

Legislative – This committee is responsible for tracking local, state, and federal legislation which may affect crime victim rights. The committee disseminates this information via the Victim Rights Legislative Newsletter.

Information – This committee is responsible for gathering and sharing information regarding crime victim rights and local victim rights unit practices and procedures from all counties in the state. They disseminate this information through the publication of the Victim Rights Forum Newsletter. This committee

is also responsible for assisting in the production and distribution of the forum directory.

Training – This committee is responsible for assisting in monitoring and assessing training needs for victim rights advocates and assisting with the development and implementation of trainings for prosecutor-based victim advocates.

Crime Victim Rights Week – This committee is responsible for the organization of events and distribution of information on the forum's Crime Victim

Rights Week activities. Its purpose is to promote victim rights advocacy at the state level during National Crime Victim Rights Week each year.

Crime Victim Foundation – This committee is responsible for working with the Crime Victim Foundation staff and assisting with the development of the crime victim reimbursement application and application guidelines. It also reviews applications for reimbursement payments.

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facing survivors of domestic violence including divorce, child custody, parental rights, landlord-tenant disputes, and personal protection orders, to name a few.

There are many benefits to the Underground Railroad's new legal program. Legal assistance and representation is free to clients who qualify. Clients pay only court costs and filing fees, but do not have to pay attorney fees. Clients who do not qualify for free services pay a minimal amount and there are no retainer fees. For many victims of domestic violence, the cost of any court action is the barrier to escaping their domestic violence situation. A payment plan is available for clients in the event that they cannot afford to pay court costs all at once.

Another requirement of the grant is that all clients who are receiving legal services

attend counseling at the Underground Railroad. The agency believes this is a very important link in the fight against domestic violence. The case managers at the Underground Railroad are specially trained to counsel victims of domestic violence about the cycle of violence and about safety planning in the event that the abuser becomes enraged over a legal action. Many clients have expressed their desire to be in counseling, and have their children in counseling, in order to educate themselves on domestic violence issues.

Currently, there are over 30 clients using the Underground Railroad's legal services. The response to this program has been very positive. Clients have stated that were it not for this new program, they would have no choice but to stay in their abusive relationships. Other clients have voiced appreciation for the ease with which they have located

In addition to these committees, the president appoints *ad hoc* committees. Currently, the forum has two. The School Violence Committee has been charged with the responsibility of looking at ways prosecutors could feasibly assist the schools in their counties in addressing the issue of school violence. The Victim Rights Advocate Certification Committee has been charged with the responsibility of researching the development of a certification process for prosecutor-based victim advocates in the state of Michigan and reporting its findings to the forum. ■

Terri Young is a Victim Rights Coordinator for the Prosecuting Attorneys Association of Michigan. For more information about the Victim Rights Forum, or if you are interested in speaking at a forum meeting, contact Anita Droog, forum president, at (616) 336-2856 or Terri Young, PAAM Victim Rights Coordinator, at (517) 334-6060 ext. 815.

and met with an attorney to begin their case. The Underground Railroad is very excited with the results and the potential for the Civil Legal Assistance Project. It expects a continued positive response and expansion of the legal project as more survivors learn that these invaluable services are available. ■

Gretchen Nielsen is a Civil Legal Assistance Attorney for the Underground Railroad, Inc. in Saginaw, MI. D. Thomas Nelson is the Project Coordinator for the CVSC Technical Assistance Project at the Michigan Public Health Institute in Okemos, MI, and is former Director for the Crime Victims Bar Association at the National Center for Victims of Crime in Arlington, VA.

For more information on civil legal remedies for survivors of crime, contact the National Crime Victims' Bar Association at (703) 276-0960, or access their web page at www.victimbar.org. For more information on the Underground Railroad or its Civil Legal Assistance Project, please call (517) 755-0413.

MSA Volunteers - Link to Justice

■ *By Terrence Jungel, MSA*

For the first 200 years of our country's existence, the criminal justice system focused primarily on the rights of the accused, often victimizing for a second time the victims who had already suffered sufficient hurt and fear in a system which was insensitive to their needs. Identifying this void in the criminal justice system in 1987, the Michigan Sheriffs' Association formed the Victim Advocate Program which now operates in 28 of the 83 counties in Michigan. Victim advocates work to provide short-term crisis intervention to victims of crime, victims of life's misfortunes and their surviving loved ones.

The program, which began in 1987, is the only state program to receive the presidential citation for private sector initiatives from President Ronald Reagan in 1989.

Trained through the Michigan Sheriffs' Association and directed by the local sheriff's office, the Victim Advocate Units are comprised of caring and compassionate volunteers who have dedicated themselves to helping victims and survivors work through a crisis or a crime that has been perpetrated against them. Each advocate is trained in various aspects of police procedures, the judicial system, stages of grief and loss, and appropriate communication. They are the helping hands of law enforcement, fire departments and other emergency personnel. By providing needed assistance and intervention, they free the employees of those respective departments to do their jobs without leaving the victims ignored or out in the cold, thus avoiding further victimization. At the crime scene they comfort and help victims and survivors and make

appropriate referrals to agencies and services within their communities, according to their particular needs. They also serve as a liaison for victims, survivors, their families and officials on the scene, as well as emergency services providers.

Victim advocates play a vital role in keeping the victim informed of a sometimes frightening and cumbersome bureaucracy, educating them as to their rights as survivors and informing them of victim rights legislation. Advocates serve as a vital link between victims and the criminal justice system, beginning with the investigating officer and possibly culminating with the prosecutor in a trial. The advocates' services free officers to complete their investigative duties and assist in follow-up calls. There is a link between the work of the advocates and an increased conviction rate as a result of communication between the victims and the prosecutor's office. Advocates assist in monitoring the location of the suspects while keeping the victim survivor informed of the case status. An informed survivor often feels better about the criminal justice system and can find transition back into everyday life easier after suffering a traumatic event.

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The MSA's TRIAD program is a three-sided approach to crime prevention and education. The three sides are: Sheriffs, Police Chiefs and the American Association of Retired Persons.

One emphasis of the program is to provide crime prevention and education programs for older community members. Activities conducted by existing programs center on both the previctimization (preventive) and the post-victimization (victim advocate assistance) aspects, an area in which Michigan sheriffs excel.

Advocates serve as a vital link between victims and the criminal justice system, beginning with the investigating officer and possibly culminating with the prosecutor in a trial.

TRIAD works to improve the quality of life for seniors by providing an opportunity for the exchange of information between local law enforcement and older persons. Through this communication, TRIAD can also focus on reducing unwarranted fear of crime.

This information exchange is facilitated through a body called the Seniors and Law Enforcement Together Council (SALT Council), which is made up of representatives of the three groups. One of the duties of this council is to assess the law enforcement needs of seniors in a community through a comprehensive survey. Based on the results, the council then develops programs to address those needs. Identifying the needs of senior citizens and victims enables us to better use our finite resources more effectively and efficiently.

Michigan sheriffs are on the front line in providing services to victims and the elderly. ■

Terrence Jungel is the Executive Director of the Michigan Sheriffs' Association in Lansing, MI. If you would like more information on either TRIAD or the Victim Advocate Program, please contact your local sheriff's office or the Michigan Sheriffs' Association at 1-800-875-5500.

Michigan Judicial Institute to Provide Training

■ *By Mary Lovik, J.D.*

The Michigan Judicial Institute (MJl) has recently received a victim assistance training grant from the Crime Victim Services Commission to develop a seminar presentation and reference manual on the Crime Victims Rights Act for judicial branch employees.

MJl has three objectives for this project:

1. To educate court personnel about the Crime Victims Rights Act and other statutes protecting crime victims.
2. To train court personnel to carry out their duties in a way that shows consideration for the safety, confidentiality, financial and other personal or psychological concerns of crime victims.
3. To inform court personnel about other community resources that can assist crime victims with concerns relating to the crime.

The primary audience for MJl's seminar presentation will be probation officers employed by Michigan district courts and

the family division of circuit courts. MJl will use training grant funds to develop and present two four-hour seminar sessions on "Implementing the Crime Victims Rights Act in Your Court." These sessions will be offered in the summer of 2000 and during 2001. For more information on these seminars, call Peter Stathakis at (517) 334-8606.

The *MJl Victim Rights Manual* will be distributed in September, 2001 to Michigan trial court judges, magistrates, family division referees, district and circuit court probation officers, family division probation officers, county clerks, and the Crime Victim Services Commission. It is intended to serve as a permanent reference for readers to use on a daily basis, and as part of a course curriculum during in-service or other types of training. For more information on this manual, call Mary Lovik at (517) 334-7805.

MJl is a division of the Michigan Supreme Court, State Court Administrative Office. The Michigan Supreme Court established MJl in 1977 to provide educational programs and training resources for all judicial branch employees. ■

Mary Lovik is a Publications Administrator with the Michigan Judicial Institute.

Evaluation Workshops for VOCA Grantees

■ *By David Bercham*

Those agencies that have received grant compliance and needs assessment site visits from Michigan Public Health Institute (MPHI) staff recall the portion of the site visit during which we discussed program evaluation. We are very happy to say, based on feedback received during these site visits, that many of you are not only meeting the present VOCA requirements for program evaluation, but many of you are conducting high quality process and outcome evaluations of your programs that are proving very beneficial to the vital services that you provide to victims of crime.

During these site visits, many of you have shared the challenges and barriers that you have encountered as you have implemented these evaluations. Issues of staff allocation, funding for evaluation, securing non-monetary resources, and concern about evaluation not being

beneficial to your programs are very real issues that need to be addressed in pragmatic ways. MPHI and the Crime Victim Services Commission (CVSC) realize the impact of these challenges and barriers and want to work with you to minimize them.

... one workshop will be held in East Lansing on July 18, and the other will be held in Sault Ste. Marie on July 28 so that travel time and associated costs can be reduced.

MPHI, in partnership with the CVSC, is currently planning an evaluation workshop that will be held twice in the latter half of July. In order to provide a measure of convenience to VOCA-funded sites, one workshop will be held in East Lansing on July 18, and the other will be held in Sault Ste. Marie on July 28. We hope that this will reduce travel time and associated costs.

Cris Sullivan, Ph.D., Assistant Professor at Michigan State University, is lending her vast expertise in program evaluation to development of the workshop curriculum and its presentation. The goals of this workshop are to disseminate information that will: 1) help VOCA-funded sites be able to correctly complete the evaluation component in the VOCA grant application; 2) give attendees a realistic idea of what they can accomplish with respect to program evaluation, given the unique circumstances of their respective agencies; and 3) help grantees develop or modify evaluation tools that will be of practical use to their work. We hope that this workshop will be beneficial to you and we welcome any suggestions or comments that you may have. ■

David Bercham is a Research Associate with the Michigan Public Health Institute in Okemos, MI.